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the people
and places
that impacted
the iconic
comedian

*Mitch Hedberg's
Minnesota*



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SUSAN DU

THE STAT SHEET

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The FM call signal where you can hear Twins games this year after a four-year extension with the Wolf

1 in 4

Shootings last year in Minneapolis that involved a car, says a new Star Tribune study

“Is it full of cocaine?”

Reader @unbornapple responds to “A Minnesota brewery is selling a MyPillow-themed beer” at citypages.com

THE LATEST GENERATION

DO THE YOUTHS STILL PARTY? A new JAMA Pediatrics study found that the average age American teens start using drugs—even alcohol and tobacco—is increasing, with fewer young people using before they turn 16 than a decade ago. (They’re engaging in fewer so-called “risky” behaviors overall: Other studies of late have noted teens are having less sex than they used to, and correspondingly, the teen birth rate is falling.) Of the 18 drugs adolescents were surveyed about in the study, inhalants had the lowest average age of first-time use (15.4), with cocaine and crack cocaine coming in latest (18).

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WAGE GAMES

Report: Target raised pay but slashed schedules and benefits

Minnesota retail giant Target pays its store employees an hourly minimum wage of \$13 since the summer of 2019. By the end of 2020, it's supposed to increase to \$15.

But several employees told the Guardian that even though their wages are going up, their pay and benefits seem to be shrinking. That's because the raises are often accompanied by slashed schedules.

"My biweekly paycheck doesn't even pay rent," Massachusetts worker Matt Funnell said. He told the Guardian his full-time, over-30-hours-a-week schedule had been cut to less than 10 hours a week at the beginning of the year. He was losing his health insurance and "other benefits," as were his co-workers.

"My higher-ups still expect us to get the same amount of work done in a fraction of the time," he said.

It's a familiar complaint. Last year, Business Insider went deep on the company's 2018 "modernization plan," which was supposed to revamp how stores are run. After talking to dozens of workers and reviewing leaked documents, the publication reported part of that plan was scaling back or eliminating positions in the stores' backrooms.

Target worker organizers thought it might have been an attempt to compete with Amazon's market-crushing business model, but said it was making their stockrooms into crowded, unsafe "nightmares." Thirteen current and former employees told Business Insider their hours had been drastically cut in the previous year, forcing employees to complete heavy workloads in a short amount of time.

"I was in charge of 32 aisles by myself and I cried twice in the back room because I felt like I was drowning in work," an Arizona employee said.



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Target told the publication it was investing more than ever into payroll, but declined to provide specific numbers.

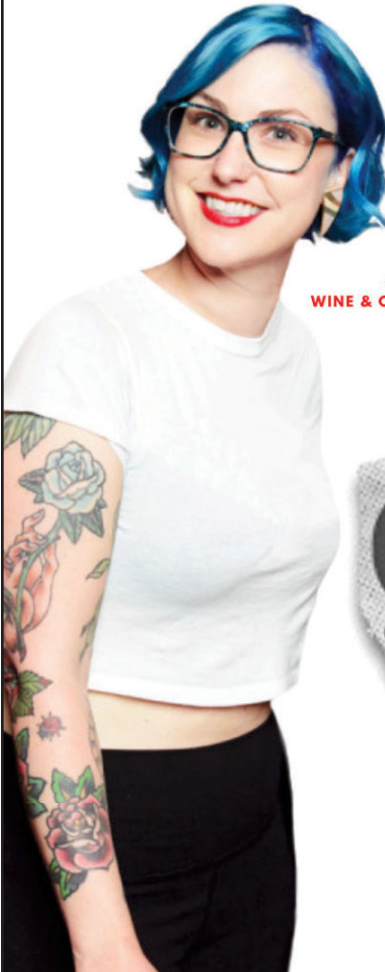
Meanwhile, morale isn't looking great. Target Workers Unite, an employee advocacy group (Target is notoriously anti-union), recently asked 500 Target workers in over 380 stores and 44 different states about their lives and their work conditions.

Only 12.7 percent of workers who responded said they could survive on wages from Target alone, and 56 percent reported struggling to afford food while working there. Another 12.8 percent said they've been homeless.

More than half the respondents reported that management has told them not to discuss wages with other workers. Only 16 percent felt the expectations of management were "realistic and attainable."

Target didn't respond to interview requests, but the company once again denied its workers' claims in a statement to the Guardian.

"Every year, we survey hundreds of thousands of team members and consistently hear from our team that they're satisfied with the pay, benefits, and experiences they receive from Target," read the company statement. —HANNAH JONES



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Mitch Hedberg's Minnesota

TAKE A TWIN CITIES TOUR OF THE PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT IMPACTED THE ICONIC COMEDIAN — By **CHARLIE GILLMER**

ON MARCH 30, 2005, Minnesota-born standup Mitch Hedberg died at age 37.

While Hedberg wasn't necessarily one of the best-known comedians on the scene, he was one of the most beloved. He had a knack for oddball observations on mundane things, and his concise style made him unendingly quotable.

"I like refried beans. That's why I want to try fried beans," he told a crowd dur-

ing one bit. "Maybe they're just as good, and we're wasting time."

"The thing that's depressing about tennis is no matter how good I get, I'll never be as good as a wall," he joked another time.

Prior to his passing, Hedberg had appeared on multiple Comedy Central shows, performed 11 times on *The Late Show with David Letterman*, and

had earned the respect from his fellow comedians.

But before any of that happened, before he even dreamed of being a comic, Hedberg was just a kid growing up on the east side of St. Paul. These origins are a big part of his story. But, since his death was the result of an overdose of heroin and cocaine, Hedberg's legacy has been shaped greatly by the end of his life.

Mitch's father, Arne, remembers being visited by magazines like *Rolling Stone* after his son's death and realizing, "all they really wanted to zero in on was his drug use and they didn't want to know him as a person. They just wanted to dig into that stuff."

With that in mind, here's a look at the local people, places, and experiences that turned Hedberg into such a funny, likeable guy.



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Mitch performing at Seattle's Comedy Underground.

TIM SCHLECHT

AMES ELEMENTARY

"When I was a boy, I would lay in my twin-sized bed and wonder where my brother was."

—MITCH HEDBERG

"I MET MITCH at Ames Elementary School on the first day of kindergarten," says Tim Schlecht, Hedberg's lifelong friend. "We sat right next to one another."

Hedberg attended Ames, now closed, from kindergarten through sixth grade, where he was a pretty shy kid. "When you first met him, he'd be a little reserved," says Schlecht.

Arne remembers this as well. "He was so extremely shy that it was almost awkward. If we took him to a family gathering—especially my family up in Duluth—my god, he was just stiff with fear."

Angie, Mitch's younger sister, notes that this shyness is common with Hedbergs. But with that shyness, "humor definitely runs in our family," she adds. Humor wasn't a perfect defense mechanism, though, and Mitch would occasionally act out in response to discomfort.

"I remember in the first grade I knew something was strange," says Arne, recalling that Mitch didn't like his teacher that year. "All of a sudden, he refused to go to school. I would have to actually put him over my shoulder and carry him up halfway to school and the teacher carried him the other half."

When the teacher died unexpectedly that year, Mitch relaxed, and was able to go to school without a problem. Arne never learned what it was that upset Mitch so much.

During this time, Mitch developed an odd habit: He would recline in a chair, close his eyes, and rock his head back and forth. "[He did this] every single day for at

least an hour," says Arne. "He continued to do that his whole life. It was almost scary sometimes."

WHITE BEAR AVENUE AND SEVENTH STREET

"I wanna hang a map of the world in my house. Then I'm gonna put pins into all the locations that I've traveled to. But first, I'm gonna have to travel to the top two corners of the map, so it won't fall down."

—MITCH HEDBERG

IN HIS EARLIEST YEARS, Mitch and his two sisters were raised by their parents, Arne and Mary, near the intersection of White Bear Avenue and Seventh Street on the east side of St. Paul. In Schlecht's recollection, it was not an unusual childhood. "We were pretty strait-laced kids," he says, recalling things like playing kickball with the other neighborhood children.

But it was in this house that Mitch began to show his comedy chops. As a child of the '70s, Mitch came of age in the early days of *Saturday Night Live* and *Second City TV*. "We'd make up our own skits, and Arne and Mary would watch," remembers Schlecht.

Mitch was also a fan of Steve Martin, and while he wasn't outwardly trying to be a standup comic, his comedy skills quickly emerged. Schlecht remembers that some days, after school, they would be locked out of their houses while their parents were at work. Sitting on the Hedbergs' screened-in porch, Mitch "started cracking jokes," he says. "He'd be making fun of his sister, he'd be making fun of me." Schlecht is quick to point out, however,



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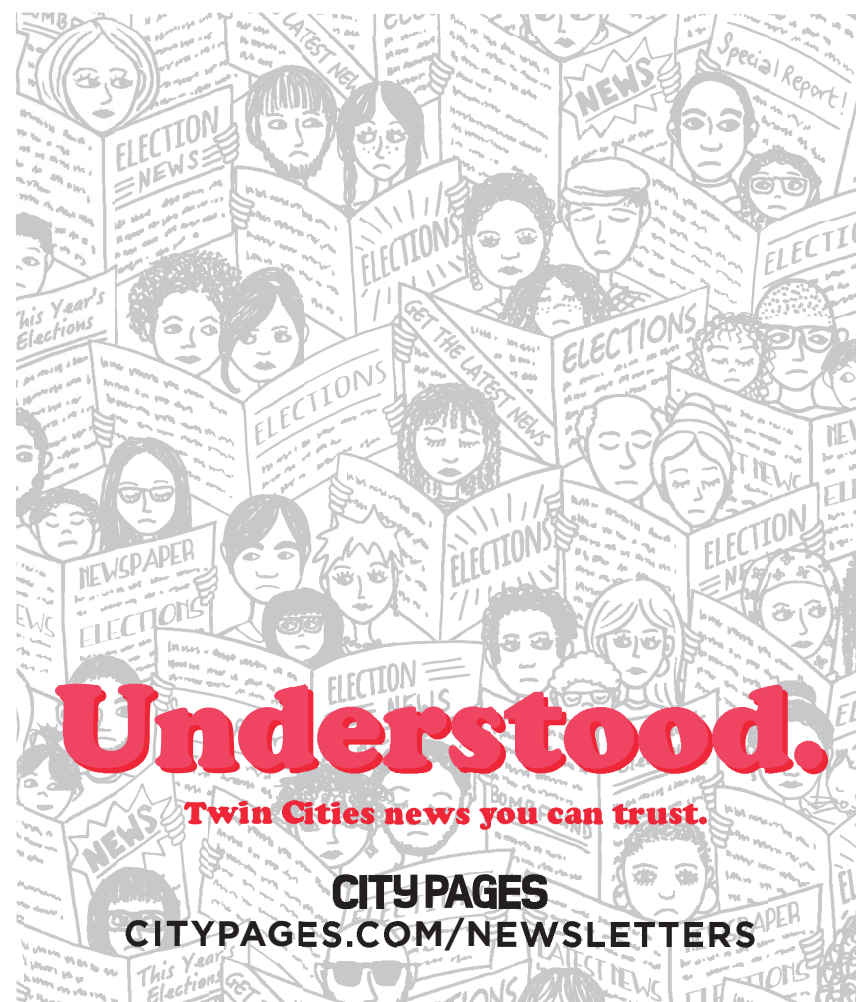
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that Mitch could be funny without being mean.

Schlecht, who was on the road with Hedberg when he actually gave standup comedy a shot in 1989, mentions the same thing about the beginning of Mitch's comedy. "When he first started, he didn't swear in those early days. Onstage he's, 'I don't want to swear. I don't want to talk about sex. I don't want to talk about poop.'" The swearing may have changed, but Mitch's ability to veer away from well-trod subjects became a major part of his appeal.

His sister Angie, who was born five years after Mitch, remembers her brother entertaining her while they were home alone. "He used to disappear under the front porch and then he'd come out with a fishbowl on his head," she recalls. "He'd say, 'Just imagine if I was born with this fishbowl on my head and I'm trying to get dates.' It was so stupid, but it was just the beginning of him."

It was clear that Mitch wanted more than to just entertain his family. Arne recalls finding a letter that Mitch wrote, but never sent, to a celebrity he liked when he was seven or eight. While Arne can't recall who the letter was addressed to specifically, he does remember what his son wrote. "He said, 'I love to sing, I love to dance, I love to do all this, but I'm stuck here in this home and my parents are so old-fashioned they won't let me go.'"

That sense of being stuck started to define Mitch as he grew older.

HARDING HIGH SCHOOL

"When I was 18, I was kind of sick of living here, so my friend Tim and I packed up his Volare. We moved from Minnesota to Florida. We wanted to move to Texas, but the front-end alignment was bad."

— MITCH HEDBERG

"HE WAS PRETTY MUCH a model little boy up 'til about 12 years old. Until he started maturing, and then he went his own way," his father remembers. In addition to growing out his now-iconic long hair around age 14, Mitch started to lose interest in doing what was expected of him.

"At that age we were all getting kind of bored," says Schlecht.

At Harding, Arne recalls, Mitch "was pretty spotty at best. He either got an A or an F depending on what he was doing." It was determined by his interest, "certain things he really loved and other things he didn't even show up for."

Arne remembers receiving a phone call from a school administrator asking

him and Mary if they wanted Mitch to graduate. "I think they wanted to get rid of him," he says.

His parents tried to intervene but, as Arne explains, it was hard. "If you gave him advice he said he'd do it and then he'd just go his own way because he didn't like confrontation."

Mitch is listed under "Camera Shy" in his junior yearbook, along with all the other students who didn't get school pictures taken. And while most of his classmates submitted senior bios the next year, Mitch has a blank space next to his name. Instead, his most notable presence in the whole thing is in the senior class superlatives, where he's doing a handstand in his class clown photo.

Schlecht saw the other side of it. The two had grown apart during their junior high years, but started to spend more time together in high school.

They tried starting a band, though they never got good enough to play any concerts. "He wanted to be a musician at that time," says Schlecht. That's where the long hair came from, and a lot of his money went into concert tickets or music equipment.

With the boredom also came the beginning of Mitch's partying. Though it would change later, Mitch was actually among the cleaner of Schlecht's friends. "I think that's why I liked hanging out with him, because I wanted to get away from it," says Schlecht. "He was kind of like my rock in a weird way, because he was stable. All my other friends, they just wanted to keep partying." For Mitch, it wasn't the goal, it was just a way to kill time until he could set off on his own.

In 1986, Mitch graduated from Harding. A few months later he, Schlecht, and another friend hit the road in hopes of becoming musicians. They never made it in the music world, but from then on out Mitch never returned to Minnesota for very long. Instead he moved from city to city, and drove across the country going from one comedy club to another.

Mitch regularly wrote to his parents. Sometimes the letters were brief. "There's a postcard," Arne says, "but all it says is, 'I had some Indian food in Vancouver, it was great.' So that's enough to at least let you know where he is and what he's doing."

Then there are the absurd ones. One of Mitch's most famous jokes recounts misspelling "really" as "rarely" and choosing to make the letter fit the mistake. According to Angie, the line, "I rarely drive steamboats, Dad," actually was included in a letter Mitch sent home. As she recalls, "it was so hilarious. It made no sense in the letter at all."

It's clear that Mitch valued that connection with his parents. In one letter Arne has kept, Mitch says he'll make his dad's car payments if he shaves his mustache, much like when Arne offered to pay Mitch if he would cut his hair as a



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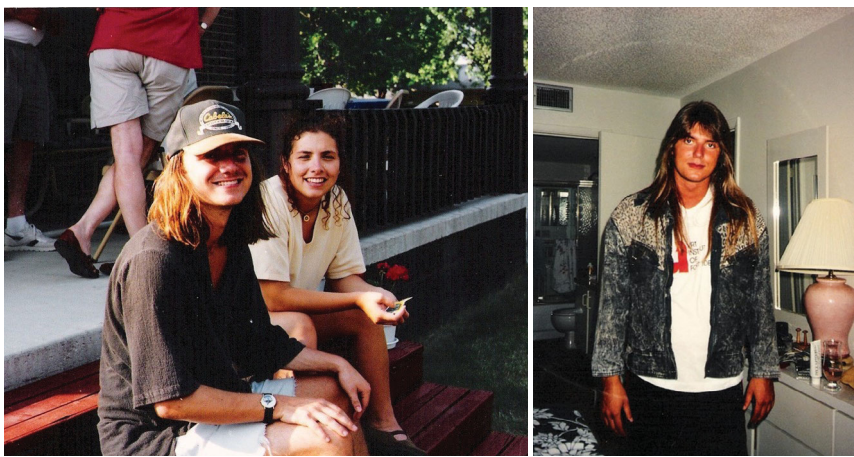
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teenager. Mitch never took the deal, but he remembered it enough to joke about it with his father.

In another, he says he wishes his parents could be on the road with him.

In Schlecht's eyes, this is a testament not just to his friend, but to Arne and Mary. "His parents, they were so great, they just made you want to stay in touch with them. He was close to his folks, and his folks were great to everybody—all of us."

CHI-CHI'S

"A burrito is a sleeping bag for ground beef."

— MITCH HEDBERG

IN THE YEARS he was on the road, Mitch made ends meet by working in restaurant kitchens. "He never lasted long at those jobs, but he could always get them," says Jana Johnson, his girlfriend through most of the '90s.

He could get them because he'd built up experience working at Chi-Chi's near the Maplewood Mall while in high school. Mitch was never a foodie, but Schlecht says that Mitch "loved Mexican food."

Angie recalls that Mitch would smell strongly of Mexican food when he would return home at night, and the experiences he had at the restaurant would have enough of an impact on Mitch that they would become the basis of his lone feature film, *Los Enchiladas*.

The movie follows a group of restaurant employees and their sketchy bosses as they prepare for Cinco de Mayo.

According to Johnson, who starred in and co-produced the movie, Mitch "was always a Minnesota boy." When they had the money to make the movie, she says, "there was no question that that's where we were going to go."

In fact, they were able to film at the same Chi-Chi's that Mitch had worked at in high school. They had to shoot in the middle of the night so the restaurant could stay open during normal business hours. "The first night they sent the manager to

Left: Mitch with Jana Johnson.
Right: Mitch in 1990.

stay there with us overnight," remembers Johnson, "and the second night they just handed us the keys."

Los Enchiladas never saw a wide release, but it did make it to the Sundance Film Festival in 1999.

ROBERT AND SIXTH STREETS

"I got to act with Peter Frampton in a movie. We had to smoke pot for a scene, but it was fake pot. Do not buy pot on a movie set. But I got to smoke fake pot with Peter Frampton, that's a cool story. It's as cool as smoking real pot with a guy who looks like Peter Frampton. I've done that way more."

— MITCH HEDBERG

WHILE MAKING *Los Enchiladas*, Mitch and other members of the crew rented an apartment on Robert and Sixth in downtown St. Paul. It was affordable, but it was a difficult experience.

"We were shooting overnight and then we would come back to sleep during the day," says Johnson, "but they were building a parking lot next to us, and so the jackhammers would go on during the day. So we had wood over the windows, and I'm sure it wasn't a very nice area, so we just fit right in."

Living in squalor wasn't new to Mitch. After leaving Minnesota, Schlecht recalls sneaking into hotel rooms between when occupants checked out and when the maid service started so they could shower, or spending a day doing hospital laundry for a measly paycheck. It was a sacrifice

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he was willing to make because he was committed to a life in entertainment.

One morning Schlecht, who was staying in the downtown apartment while he worked as the set photographer, was leaving to hang out with his brother when he was picked up by a police officer. He had been incorrectly identified as the perpetrator of a sex crime.

Later that day, Mitch bailed him out of jail. “He had a big heart, man,” he says. “There was a lot of small stuff that he would do for you.”

Angie agrees. Mitch would often buy her things she needed for her house, or extravagant gifts that she wouldn’t necessarily even want. “I always felt guilty about that, but he was just very generous, very giving.”

She remembers him being generous with strangers, too. “One time there were college students that were talking to him. They didn’t have an air conditioner, and they were telling him how hot it was. So he had an air conditioner delivered to them.”

ACME COMEDY CO.

“As a comedian living in Hollywood, everyone wants me to do things besides comedy. ‘Can you act?’ ‘Write us a script!’ They want me to do things related to comedy, but not comedy. It’s as though I was a cook, and I worked my ass off to become a really good cook, and they said, ‘Okay, you’re a cook. Can you farm?’”

— MITCH HEDBERG

WHILE HIS MOVIE career never quite took off, Mitch found plenty of success as a comic. He returned again to the Twin



TIM SCHLECHT

Cities to record his most famous album, *Mitch All Together*, at Acme Comedy Co. in Minneapolis.

When Mitch would return to Minnesota for standup gigs, he would usually stay at home.

“There’s something that’s always going to be kind of small-town, no matter if you’re from St. Paul or Minneapolis, about being from Minnesota,” says Johnson. “It’s just a different mentality.”

He would even bring some comedian friends to meet his family. “Growing up, it was kind of cool,” Angie says, “because

Mitch working on *Los Enchiladas* with Doug Stanhope.

when he was performing a lot of times comedians would stay in the extra bedroom.”

In the years since his death, fellow comedians still visit the Hedbergs. “Kevin Hart shares my brother’s manager,” Angie explains. “He was very honored to meet my dad, which was an amazing thing: to have Kevin Hart honored to meet Mitch Hedberg’s dad.”

ROSELAWN CEMETERY

“I used to do drugs. I still do, but I used to, too.”

— MITCH HEDBERG

THOUGH HE DIED in New Jersey, Mitch was returned to Minnesota for his burial. His final resting place is Roselawn Cemetery in Roseville. His mother was buried next to him after her death in 2012.

At the funeral proceedings in the Twin Cities, it became clear just how many people had been touched by Mitch’s kindness and sense of humor over the years. “It was hard, because a lot of people came that we hadn’t seen in years,” remembers Angie.

His third grade teacher, Mrs. Finke, was one of the first people to arrive at his wake to pay respects. “She just loved my brother,” Angie says.

But it wasn’t just people who’d known him personally. “At the time we were handling Mitch’s T-shirt sales for him,” says Arne. “After he died, we looked on the internet, and there were thousands of orders for T-shirts—thousands! It took us weeks to [send them out].”

The corporate world had a presence, too. “Mitch used to be a voiceover for Jimmy John’s,” says Angie. “There was a very, very, very large bouquet from Jimmy John’s at his wake and everybody was like, ‘God, did he just really love Jimmy John’s, or what?’”

To this day, Mitch is beloved. But it’s still hard for people to believe that the oft-quoted comedian came from normal, humble beginnings in St. Paul. Angie still surprises people when she reveals her relation to him. “When [my co-workers] found out he was my brother nobody believed me. I had to literally pull up pictures, and everybody was stunned.”

Though he died at 37, Mitch Hedberg accomplished a lot in his short time on Earth. The love that so many people have for him—from those who knew him before he was famous to those who only know him through his jokes—will continue to live on. **CP**

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BY THERESA J. BECKHUSEN

Tucked into a cozy brick building off Lake Street in Minneapolis's Whittier neighborhood you'll find Provision Community Restaurant, the city's only give-as-you-can restaurant. Its bright yellow front door is a cheery token of what's inside: communal tables, delicious food, and the promise of community.

After years of working in restaurants and volunteering in soup kitchens and shelters, Provision founder and executive director Anna Wienke dreamed of creating a space that would be rooted in community, where anyone could come in, sit down to a home-cooked meal, and chat with someone new, all without the barrier of price.

"I can't be the first person to think of this," Wienke remembers thinking. So she researched and found similar cafes and restaurants around the country—most notably New Jersey's JBJ Soul Kitchen, a community restaurant run by the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation (filed away under: another reason to love Bon Jovi). After talking with JBJ's staff, Wienke developed her idea further. The restaurant she envisioned wouldn't just have a different pay model; it would be "designed intentionally to encourage [community]: set mealtimes, communal tables, family-style service, everyone's eating the same thing."

Dining at Provision has the feel of going to the spacious home of a dear friend who's really good at cooking—and has invited over everyone they know. They might not be people you've met before, but after an hour around the table, passing plates and serving bowls back and forth, you've heard their stories, and maybe learned about their preferred Thai restaurant or their top five favorite pizza places. By the time you walk out the door, you feel energized and refreshed, happy to have expanded your circle of connection.

Oh, and the dishes Provision serves are delicious, too. At a recent Saturday brunch, we tucked into a bounty of food placed before us. There was an airy egg white soufflé studded with grape tomatoes perfectly complemented by a salad of simply dressed greens. A basket of tender scones made by a volunteer who works for Rustica followed, which paired beautifully with the best applesauce I've ever had—fresh and laced with cinnamon. Rounding things out were breakfast poutine made of crispy potatoes and cheesy sauce, spaghetti squash carbonara, an

oatmeal and cereal bar, and a plate of colorful, assorted pickles.

The pickles and carbonara are evidence of Provision's work to reduce food waste whenever possible: What to do with an influx of produce? Pickle it. What to do with a sheet pan of spaghetti squash leftover from last night's dinner? Make a breakfast carbonara.

Approximately 90 percent of Provision's ingredients come from partner organizations like Rustica, Sysco, Wildflyer Coffee, Twin Cities Co-op Partners,

and local farms. "Every day is different," says Wienke. Volunteer chefs arrive a few hours before mealtimes to see what's come in and what they can cook from it. This means no two visits to Provision are the same—except maybe for those pickles and applesauce—and that sometimes they might not have small things you'd expect from restaurants like, say, decaf coffee or tea.

Though I feel supported by my own robust community, it felt nourishing to meet new people around a shared table.

COME AS YOU ARE

Provision asks and answers:
What do you bring to the table?



LUCY HAWTHORNE

One man said he visits Provision every Saturday when he's not traveling. A father and daughter who live a few blocks away also walked over for their first visit, after seeing construction around the space over the past year. Still another couple had moved to the Twin Cities in August, one to study food insecurity at the University of Minnesota. Over the course of the meal, conversation revolved around food, often sharing favorite places to dine out in the Twin Cities.

Ours was pretty privileged talk. Not everyone has the means or ability to go out

PROVISION COMMUNITY RESTAURANT

2940 Harriet Ave. S.,
Minneapolis
provisioncommunity.org

to eat, something Wienke considered when developing Provision. For her, going out to eat is "where people are out in the world

with others and have the opportunity to engage." She wanted Provision to offer that chance to everyone.

The restaurant's literature points out that 40 percent of food in America goes to waste while one in six people goes hungry. This restaurant works as a sort of net, catching some of that food and sharing it with those who may be hungry—whether physically or emotionally.

"Anyone can be in hardship," Wienke explains. "Anyone can be in need of being around people."

Chances to engage don't begin and end with the restaurant. Beyond its family-style meals, Provision offers its kitchen as a commercial space for budding food businesses. Wienke provides guidance and mentorship on everything from reducing food waste to navigating bureaucratic red tape. "I love nothing more than fostering someone's belief in themselves," she says. The dining area has hosted other organizations, like Southside Harm Reduction Services, Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, and Project for Pride in Living, as well as a book club. "We're just continuing to be open to ideas and ways we can partner and support others that are trying to do what they can in their own way to make the community better," she says.

As the hospitality world undergoes some rapid changes, Wienke sees Provision as supportive of this growth and movement, pointing to organizations that are approaching things differently, such as All Square, a local nonprofit restaurant that supports formerly incarcerated individuals. The name Provision came, after all, from thinking about everyone's personal



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LUCY HAWTHORNE

provision—what they can offer to their communities. Wienke hopes Provision and likeminded organizations will serve as an example to traditional businesses: “How can for-profit businesses become socially conscious, and try to use their power for good? Why can’t you turn a profit and also support the community in multiple ways so you’re not just about making money?”

In this vein, Provision hosts monthly ticketed “Sustainability Dinners” where a guest chef from a Twin Cities restaurant prepares a meal and hosts a conversation about these heady concepts. Last month was Pajarito’s Tyge Nelson. March’s dinner will be hosted by Lina Goh and John Ng of Zen Box Izakaya, while April will find Tim McKee of Octo Fishbar popping up at Provision. The dinners serve to unite people for a special meal while supporting the sustainability of Provision itself.

“It also gets people in the space,” Wienke notes, which has been helpful since one of her main challenges has been explaining what exactly Provision... is.

“What are we? We’re not a food shelf, we’re not a meal program, we’re not a fancy soup kitchen,” she explains. “This is a different thing. I had no idea how challenging it would be to get people to understand. Until you come in, you really don’t.”


Provision is something of an unusual concept, especially if you’re used to the dance of dining out: being greeted at the door, led to a private table, handed a menu where you choose what to eat. The restaurant has none of the above. Its give-as-you-can model extends from patrons to volunteers. Patrons may make

a financial contribution at the door when they arrive, if they wish, but no one solicits those donations, and there’s little signage about it. “Even your presence at the table and engaging with other people is giving,” Wienke explains. That said, Wienke calculated that if 12 people gave \$20 every day, Provision would be on solid financial footing. Volunteers give their time by prepping food, setting up the dining room, bussing dishes, and—space permitting—sitting down with patrons to chat.

Looking ahead, Wienke and Provision’s board of directors envision other restaurant locations—they’re scouting St. Paul, north Minneapolis, and Seward/Phillips/Powderhorn—and the launch of the Harvest Program, which would pair mentors and mentees based on expressed skills and needs. For now, though, Wienke is focused on getting people in the door, establishing regulars, and spreading the word about the work they’re doing.

To achieve this, Provision continues serving dinner three nights a week and brunch every Saturday morning. They’re also hosting a fundraiser on April 16 at the Lumber Exchange Center to celebrate six months in operation. Brent Frederick, owner of Jester Concepts restaurant group and a Provision board member, has dedicated 1 percent of March sales from all of his restaurants to support Provision.

At Provision, there’s a seat for everyone at the table, regardless of background. “Look at it like socially responsible or socially conscious dining,” Wienke says.

Come as you are. Give as you can. Everyone at Provision will be happy just to see you. 

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Bid March 8-16.

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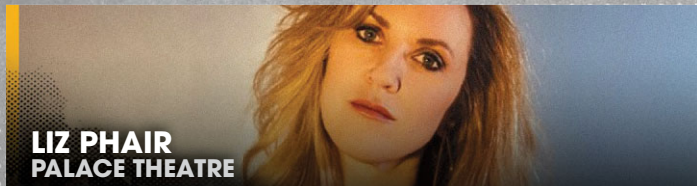
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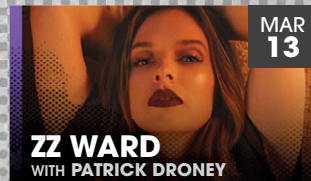
YONDER MOUNTAIN STRING BAND
WITH CHRIS CASTINO
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MAR 07



BEST COAST
WITH MANNEQUIN PUSSY

MAR 09



ZZ WARD
WITH PATRICK DRONEY

MAR 13



SHELLAC
WITH LOKI'S FOLLY

MAR 14



ALLEN STONE
WITH SAMM HENSHAW

MAR 16



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MAR 14



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WITH LEAH SENIOR

APR 23



MIKA

APR 26



DOOMTREE

MAY 02



LP

MAY 19

FITZGERALD THEATER



KAMASI WASHINGTON
WITH ASTRALBLAK

MAR 04



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LIVE
LIFE ON THE VERTICAL
WITH MARK SYNNOTT

MAR 08



WINE & CRIME PODCAST

MAR 21



WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE
WITH ELIZA RICKMAN

MAR 23



GARY GULMAN

MAR 27

FINE LINE



ANDY SHAUF
W/ MOLLY SARLÉ

MAR 05



CARNIVAL BRASILEIRO
W/ SPECIAL GUESTS

MAR 07



LIV WARFIELD
W/ #MPLS

MAR 08



MARIA AND THE COINS
ALBUM RELEASE
W/ JILLIAN RAE, EMILY HAAVIK

MAR 04



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W/ COLIN BRACEWELL

MAR 10



THE DIRTY KNOBS
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W/ JEREMY IVEY

MAR 10



of Montreal
W/ LILY AND HORN HORSE

MAR 11



COLONY HOUSE
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MAR 12



MUNGION
W/ PORKY'S GROOVE MACHINE

MAR 05



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W/ LORD DYING

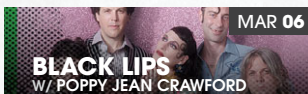
MAR 11

TURF CLUB



DAVE HAUSE & THE MERMAID
W/ INDIANOLA

MAR 05



BLACK LIPS
W/ POPPY JEAN CRAWFORD

MAR 06



THE NADAS
W/ TONY WILLIAMS

MAR 07



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MAR 06



BLOCKHEAD
W/ SHRIMPNOSE

MAR 13



THE MATTSO 2
W/ BONZAI BABY

MAR 08



WISH YOU WERE HERE
W/ DEREK TED, DAVE MEHLING

MAR 12



ADAM GREEN
W/ NATION OF LANGUAGE

MAR 14



LOWER DENS
W/ :3ION

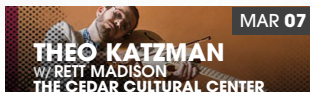
MAR 08



GLITTERATTI
W/ LYDIA LIZA

MAR 14

AROUND TOWN



THEO KATZMAN
W/ RETT MADISON
THE CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

MAR 07



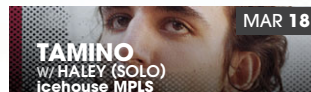
MURDER BY DEATH
W/ AMIGO THE DEVIL
THE CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

MAR 12



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MAR 14



TAMINO
W/ HALEY (SOLO)
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MAR 18



DUMB PEOPLE TOWN
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THE CEDAR CULTURAL CENTER

MAR 19

A LIST

SATURDAY FIRST Wrestling heads to Rosedale Mall for an extreme event **p. 23**

MONDAY East Lake gets in on the video game bar trend **p. 25**

Artists and designers turn poetry into visual art at Gamut Gallery.

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NICHOLAS STRAIGHT

WEDNESDAY 3.4

COMEDY

CHAD DANIELS

ACME COMEDY CO.

Chad Daniels is always on the go. Whether he's headlining a room or theater somewhere in these United States or spending time with his son and daughter back home in Fergus Falls, he never slows down. That doesn't mean he never relaxes, however. City Pages caught up with him via telephone on a golf course in Florida. "Hold on a second while I take this swing," he says. The result? "I drove into the bunker," he reports. "I had a tree in front of me, and I'm still not on the green. I'll just say that." He adds: "[Golfing], learning

piano, and learning another language are the three most difficult things to do." His most recent special, *Dad Chaniels*, came out via Amazon last year. "I'll have a completely new show," he says of his upcoming Acme dates. However, he still covers some of the same subjects, such as being a divorced dad and life in general. Current events? Not so much. "Once in a while I'll call Trump 'Bitch Tits,' but I usually leave that to the smarter folks." He'll be onstage on Wednesday for a live taping of the *Middle of Somewhere* podcast, followed by standup sets for the rest of the week. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. \$30. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. **Through Saturday —P.F. WILSON**

THURSDAY 3.5

ART/GALLERY

FROM US: TOGETHER FOREVER SOMETIMES

GAMUT GALLERY

Poetry becomes a visual art in "From Us," Gamut Gallery's latest group show. For the exhibition, typographers, illustrators, and designers were sent poetry with the titles and bylines removed. They then imagined the sayings, phrases, and verses into a work of their own. The resulting pieces include abstract interpretations, playful posters, and mission statements that may elicit a different reaction than what would result from reading the words

in a book. Thirty artists participated in this project, including Anne Ulku, Booka B, Dana Christopherson, and Destiny Davison. As for the poets: Molly-Margaret Johnson is a Brooklyn-based writer, and a self-proclaimed "sex-positive internet freak." Meanwhile, Kareem Rahma is an Egyptian-American poet living in New York City. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, March 5, from 7 to 10 p.m., and a closing party and performance at 7 p.m. Saturday, April 11. Tickets to both events are \$10; admission is free otherwise. 717 S. 10th St., Minneapolis; 612-367-4327. **Through April 11 —JESSICA ARMBRUSTER**

COMEDY

TRIXX

RICK BRONSON'S HOUSE OF COMEDY

Trixx is a standup comedian who grew up in Mississauga, Ontario, just outside of Toronto. Onstage, he talks about growing up black in Canada and life experiences in general. Trixx was born Frankie Agyemang; his stage name comes from his penchant as a youngster for playing practical jokes on family and friends. A fixture on the Canadian college comedy tour scene, he has won the Comedy Award from COCA (Canadian Organization of Campus Activities) twice. Trixx is also a talented mix DJ, and will occasionally spin tracks at clubs in his homeland. 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 9:45 p.m. Friday; 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; 9:30 p.m. Saturday. \$16-\$23. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington; 952-858-8558. **Through Sunday —P.F. WILSON**

FRIDAY 3.6

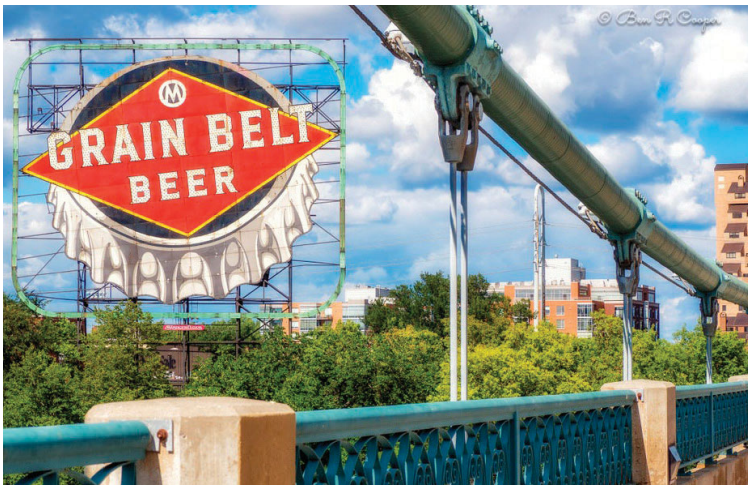
PODCAST

MY DAD WROTE A PORNO

PANTAGES THEATRE

"Not only was my dad writing erotica," says British TV director Jamie Morton, "but he chose me to be the person to read it and vet it for him." Morton would then bring his father's writings down to the pub to share with his friends. His two best mates, Alice

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 ►



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CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ►

Levine and James Cooper, thought it was hilarious, as did a lot of other folks. The trio began doing readings at parties, and soon their podcast, *My Dad Wrote a Porno*, emerged. “I think he was trying to mess with me,” Morton says of his dad’s intentions. “He’s a massive wind-up merchant, my dad.” Now in its fifth season, the podcast shows no signs of ending, largely because Morton’s dad keeps writing. “Oh, my god, we can’t stop him.” The strange thing is, even though his dad listens to, and loves, the podcast, he believes he’s a great writer. “He thinks he’s on a plain above us all, and we’re the idiots,” Morton adds, “and one day he’ll be discovered as this amazing author who wrote these incredible books.” The live show isn’t recorded for the podcast but is executed in much the same way: Morton, Levine, and Cooper read the work and comment on it, often going off on hilarious tangents. 8 p.m. \$35-\$55. 710 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-339-7007. —P.F. WILSON

FESTIVAL

FEMNIST DAY

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

This International Women’s Day, get ready for a day of mentorship, workshops, and a night market the following evening featuring feminist makers and business owners. For the third year in a row, Coven, a community and co-working space for women, nonbinary, and trans folks, is teaming up with writer Nora McInerny and Still Kickin, the nonprofit organization she co-founded (they’re also makers of the original “FeMNist” T-shirt). For the breakfast showcase, you’ll hear from social innovators as they share info on their businesses and pitch ideas. If you’re looking for feedback and business advice from other women and nonbinary entrepreneurs, stop by the mentoring sessions afterward. On Saturday, head over to the Palace Theatre for a night market featuring swag, art, and products from 50 different makers. Each of these three different events will introduce you to feminists who are shaking things up and supporting each other. Find more details about each event at femnistday.com. The showcase has a \$100 admission fee and runs from 7 to 9 a.m. Workshops follow from 10:45 a.m. to 5 p.m., and are free, but registration is required. Both happenings are at the Coven (165 Western Ave. N., Suite 8, St. Paul). The free night market is on Saturday and runs from 5 to 9 p.m. at the Palace Theatre (17 W. Seventh Place, St. Paul). **Through Saturday**—SHEILA REGAN

Friends hit the road with *Queer Malady* at Mixed Blood.



RICH RYAN

BARHOPPING

SALTED NUT ROLL CREAM ALE 2020 TAP RELEASE

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Adult candy is back at Tin Whiskers in the form of this year’s Salted Nut Roll Cream Ale. This brew is one of four collaborations that Tin Whiskers has made with Pearson’s candy, which is located just down the road from the brewery. The 2020 recipe has been updated to bring a more savory peanut butter and caramel flavoring to its signature salty goodness. For Friday’s release party, expect 15 additional beers on tap, including Pils Nye (the Science Guy) and the Irish Cream Stout, which will get revelers ready for St. Patrick’s Day two weeks ahead of time. Oh, and expect candy, merch giveaways, and more. Food Trip Foods will also be onsite, serving hot, less sugary sustenance. 3 to 11 p.m. Free. 125 Ninth St. E., St. Paul; 651-330-4734. —LOREN GREEN

ART/GALLERY

PERSONAL RECORD/INTERPOLATION

HAIR + NAILS CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

In this exhibition of two concurrent solo shows, Hannah E. Brown turns her gaze on herself and bodies like hers, rendering them artfully—and with a surrealist slant—in ballpoint pen. Sophia Chai, meanwhile, turns her photographic focus to a garage space.

Here she trains her eye on the quotidian architectural elements of corners, planes, and intersections. Both reveal what is usually covered—whether with the stuff of everyday life, emotions, or intellectual discourse. There will be an opening reception on Friday, March 6, from 7 to 10 p.m. 2222 1/2 E. 35th St., Minneapolis.

Through April 5 —CAMILLE LEFEVRE

LGBTQ/THEATER

INTERSTATE

MIXED BLOOD THEATRE

Interstate tells the story of spoken-word performer Dash and singer-songwriter Adrian, two trans artists on a national tour with the band Queer Malady. Onstage, Dash and Adrian have found an expressive space far removed from the prohibitive expectations of their Asian-American families. Even more poignantly, their music has been discovered online by others who fall outside binary gender distinctions and heteronormative sexuality, as embodied by Henry, a trans teen struggling to understand, much less express, his emerging sense of self. Kit Yan and Melissa Li collaborated on the book and music, basing the narrative on their own adventure of touring the country as the band Good Asian Drivers. Directing this Mixed Blood Theatre production is Jessica Prudencio, who previously earned accolades for helming the company’s acclaimed staging of *How to Use a Knife*. Forging camaraderie in a euphoric rush of music, *Interstate* is a welcome reminder that the most

enlightening art tends to be guided by a courageous spirit of inclusivity. 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays. \$35 guaranteed seating or free on a first-come, first-served basis. 1501 Fourth St. S., Minneapolis; 612-338-6131. **Through March 29** —BRAD RICHASON

FILM

HARRY BELAFONTE IN 1959

TRYLON CINEMA

Throughout his career as a musician and actor, Harry Belafonte was a champion of humanitarian causes. Though Belafonte’s early reputation as the “King of Calypso” hardly indicates a revolutionary artist, his popularity afforded the opportunity to pursue projects that emphasized themes of racial inequality and social justice. Such concerns were clearly on his mind early on, as evidenced by Trylon Cinema’s latest series, *Harry Belafonte in 1959*, a double feature that showcases two exemplary films from that pivotal year. *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil* is a sci-fi tale involving two survivors of an apocalyptic disaster, a black man and a white woman.

When a third man appears, however, so too does the corruptive influence of racism, a pestilence that endures even in the wasteland of annihilation. *Odds Against Tomorrow* is structured as a film noir involving three would-be bank robbers who come to find that the greatest threat to their carefully plotted heist is not the police, but the racial tensions in their midst. Filmed at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, these two gripping films celebrate an iconic artist whose work remains an indelible expression of humanitarian convictions. 7 and 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 3 and 5 p.m. Sunday. \$8. 2820 E. 33rd St., Minneapolis; 612-424-5468.

Through Sunday —BRAD RICHASON

SATURDAY 3.7

BARHOPPING

BIERSTACHELN (BEER STICKING) FEST




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This Saturday, Waldmann Brewery in St. Paul is celebrating beer poking, something that is both a hot new trend and an old-time tradition. At Bierstacheln Fest, the historically minded brewery on Smith will embrace an old technique wherein beers are caramelized using a red-hot food-grade metal poker, heated in a blacksmith’s forge, which then goes into the beer. The result is new flavor, characteristics, and depth added to the pint. For this occasion, Waldmann has

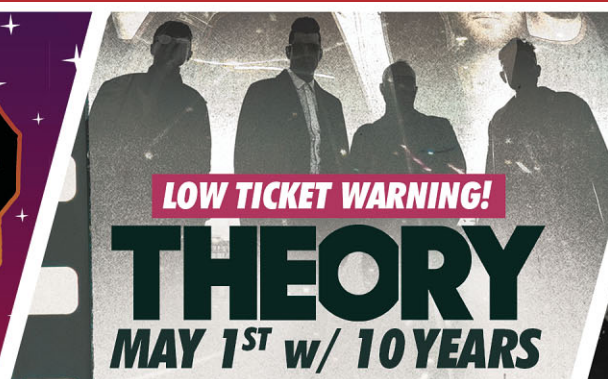
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FILM

FOREVER AGO

A new adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* hits most of the right notes



FOCUS FEATURES

BY KEITH HARRIS

Time was, a new Jane Austen movie seemed to pop up every other week—pale, witty Brits sparring their way reluctantly toward financially remunerative wedlock were basically the Marvel superheroes of the Clinton years. In 1996 alone there were two versions of *Emma*—and that was just a year after *Clueless* transplanted Austen's tale to contemporary Beverly Hills. (In other words, a year too late.) But in our Austen-depleted age, Autumn de Wilde's *Emma* benefits from lack of competition: If you're in the mood for period-appropriate repartee, it's the only game in town. Fortunately, it's a good game, and played well.

Stop me if you've heard this one before: A matchmaker who scorns any designs on marriage for herself, Emma Woodhouse (Anya Taylor-Joy) takes pride in manipulating the emotional lives of those around her (only for their own good, of course). Her sister's brother-in-law, Mr. Knightley (Johnny Flynn), scornfully predicts she'll meet her comeuppance, and when she meddles in the affairs of her less financially secure and socially adept new friend Harriet Smith (Mia Goth), Emma does indeed set off on her path to a mild yet life-changing shaming.

Emma's character requires a precise temperamental balance—we want to see a coddled yet charming conniver being humbled rather than a haughty brat being humiliated. Surveying the battlefield of society with her dark, wide-set eyes, Taylor-Joy is a personable and formidable Emma. Her porcelain forehead wrinkles stormily when offense is taken, making her a paradox: a wily schemer with an absolute inability to mask her reactions. Fortunately for her, she moves in a world where her foes are so preoccupied with countering each other's wit they miss the obvious expressions of infatuation and irritation.

A first-time director known for her commercial photography, de Wilde brings an advertorial eye that takes some adjusting to at first—in a few years, this period piece may let you know more about 2020 than 1815. But the film glides effortlessly along, not so much well-paced as confident in its own graceful gait, and the camera delights in the grammable milieu the story offers—the stately houses, the picturesque countryside, the priceless art collections, the complex hats, Johnny Flynn's bare ass.

Ah yes, Mr. Knightley is introduced butt-first, just to let you know this isn't like other Jane Austen movies—this is a cool Jane Austen movie. Tousled and more ruffable than he first lets on, Flynn isn't

EMMA

directed by Autumn de Wilde
area theaters, now playing

quite Taylor-Joy's match, but Knightley has the easy job here. All he has to do is sit back and look potentially marriageable while waiting for Emma's pride to trip her up.

As in any Austen adaptation, it's the supporting comic parts that hold *Emma* together. In particular, Bill Nighy is perfect as Emma's father, sweeping imperiously into the room with dour hypochondria, even if his elaborately patterned coats sometimes suggest that he seems to have misplaced his TARDIS. And Mia Goth's Harriet is sweetly persuadable in all the right ways.

Emma really is at times almost as frothy as macho dimwits have claimed Austen's other novels can be. The stakes are atypically low—unlike most of Austen's women, Emma has no need to secure a financial future. But its modest scope allows the story to suggest that some things in life—the sense of accomplishment that comes from successfully navigating society, the warmth of a friendship between young women—might even be just as important as a good marriage. Though maybe not more important. **C+**

ALLY EDUCATION

Pink Unicorn teaches action and understanding



LAUREN B. PHOTOGRAPHY

BY JAY GABLER

“I don’t see gender anymore, Mama. Whether somebody’s a boy or a girl don’t make no difference to me.”

Trisha is a loving mother with an open mind, and when her tween child says those words to her, Trisha’s first impulse is to listen and learn. *The Pink Unicorn* is about that learning curve, and about how Trisha learns that understanding won’t be enough: She’ll also need to take action.

There’s more than a little autobiography in Elise Forier Edie’s one-woman play, which is currently being presented by Illusion Theater at the Lowry Lab in St. Paul. As she explains in a program note, the writer is mother to a transgender child. Edie was specifically inspired to write *The Pink Unicorn* after hearing a sermon equating LGBTQ allies to Nazis and after learning of a high school that banned all extracurricular activities rather than acknowledge a Gay and Straight Alliance.

The play has spread rapidly since its 2013 premiere—unsurprisingly so, with its fluency, its economy, and its timeli-

ness as a lot of cisgender people steer into Trisha’s learning curve, catching up with the lived realities of their friends and loved ones. Tony winner Alice Ripley has recently played Trisha in New York, and 20% Theatre Company Twin Cities has presented the show at multiple venues.

Kate Guentzel stepped into Trisha’s shoes at Illusion in 2018; she’s now reprising the role in St. Paul and at venues across greater Minnesota. It’s an absolutely focused and committed performance that works because, under the direction of Michael Robins, Guentzel hews to the authenticity of a character who doesn’t seek the spotlight. Trisha doesn’t set out to wring tears or inspire laughter, and though *The Pink Unicorn* does some of each, Guentzel doesn’t hold those beats because this is not about her.

That makes it all the more graceful, and moving, when Trisha’s own youth slips into the story around its edges. We learn about her stern mother and about her brother’s struggles with addiction; the script doesn’t strain to introduce those characters, each given distinct voice by Guentzel, but lets Trisha grapple with

THE PINK UNICORN

Lowry Lab Theater
350 St. Peter St., St. Paul
Through March 15; illusiontheater.org

their relevance to her life’s unexpected turns. Nor does Edie portray her character as suddenly, universally woke: In describing her new allies, Trisha does some body-shaming and even uses an ableist slur.

The Lowry Lab Theater, a teaching space for the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists, is not one of the Twin Cities’ most glamorous performance spaces. It feels like you’re entering the Lowry Building’s hidden panic room, and when the central HVAC kicks in, actors have to raise their voices.

Perhaps the most apt show ever to be staged there was *Waiting for Godot*, but the venue also fits the down-to-earth aesthetic of this *Pink Unicorn*. Performing in mom togs on a sparsely furnished stage, Guentzel becomes Trisha and draws you into her story. If the ending’s a little cheesy, well, everybody needs a Hallmark moment once in awhile. **C**

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GRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

With *Miss Anthropocene*, Grimes upends the myth of the girl savior

BY SASHA GEFFEN

Two weeks before the release of her fifth album, Grimes shared on Instagram an illustration of a taloned hand signing a document with a fountain pen. “I, poet of destruction, hereby declare that global warming is good,” it read. “You humans have carved your existence into the earth... Be who you are. Embrace your demise, for you are the architect of it.” The declaration was signed and sealed with the name Miss Anthropocene, the album’s eponymous villain: a feminine personification of global warming, and the gleeful herald of the post-industrial end times.

Grimes, the stage name and public persona of Claire Boucher, has for the past decade woven together new age ambience, ’80s new wave, and the blunt, ecstatic gestures of J-pop and K-pop into music that feels singularly indebted to the omnivorousness of the streaming era. All her albums

have some kind of fantastical bent, whether she’s singing about *Dune* or stylish subterranean vampires, but *Miss Anthropocene* is the first to apply her sci-fi flourishes to a concrete geopolitical drama. Claiming to desire climate change is one way to defang the cosmological horror it presents. If we’re facing the inevitable end of all things, why not pretend it’s exactly what we wanted all along?

By casting herself as a villain, Grimes resists the ways many of her fans have interpreted her as a force for good: a de facto feminist from Montreal’s DIY scene who produces all her own independently released music; an environmentalist who declined to take the Ice Bucket Challenge due to concerns about wasting water mid-drought; and a self-described anti-imperialist who pledged to match \$10,000 in donations to the Council on American-Islamic Relations in the wake of Trump’s travel ban.

When, at the 2018 Met Gala, Grimes revealed her romantic partnership with Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, she faced public blowback for entangling herself with a notorious capitalist. (“I didn’t realize everyone thought I was such a by-the-books socialist,” she told *Crack* last year, in response to the reaction. “My politics are literally insane. I’ll probably go down for it in the end.”) *Miss Anthropocene* and its surrounding promotion play with the villainy cast over Grimes’s image, an attempt to tame the negative social media storm. If Grimes is no longer fit to save the world, she might as well relish in destroying it.

Miss Anthropocene isn’t the first album to take a desirous stance toward mass destruction. In 2016, Anohni released *Hopelessness*, an electronic record that reckoned with the same doom. “I wanna see this world, I wanna see it boil,” she sang on the single “4 Degrees,” so named for the amount of warming (in Celsius) that over time “would render the planet unrecognizable from anything humans have ever experienced,” as environmental journalist Gaia Vince notably put it. Anohni wanted to interrogate her own complicity in the planet’s spoiling. But she—who, like Grimes, has a history of meshing her work with ecological activism—doesn’t occupy the role of apocalypse-hungry villain throughout all of *Hopelessness*. As much as she acknowledges her particulate responsibility for what happens to the world, she also traces lines of escape from the present

nightmare. Elsewhere on the album, she makes a solemn pledge through an icy prism of vocal processing: “We will never, never again/Give birth to violent men.”

In a 2019 essay advocating for climate rage, environmental journalist Amy Westervelt challenged the “we” that’s often invoked in discussions of humanity’s role in global warming, most notably in a recent crop of books on the topic authored by men—“specifically literary white men, for whom climate change is the ultimate epic saga, in which all of humanity is both villain and hero,” Westervelt writes. “We’ had a chance to act on climate decades ago and blew it, the story goes, and now ‘we’ must rise to the challenge and save humanity. If we don’t—and we’re unlikely to—‘we’ will have only ourselves to blame.”

Using the first person plural conveniently brushes aside those members of humanity who have, over generations, made concerted and communal efforts toward preserving the environment, who risk their physical safety to block the construction of new oil pipelines and mining operations. It situates oligarchs like Musk as humanity’s last great hope and fails to challenge capitalism as a toxic, Earth-destroying process in and of itself. In the literary saga Westervelt describes, individual men must innovate their way out of hell. Humanity’s saving grace is rendered in the form of buying the right products—shelling out for a new Tesla instead of a used Chevy—rather than imagining a world where cars are not needed.

In this story of heroes and villains, another figure emerges: the young girl. Recently, the media has focused on teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg. Though she’s inspired legions to leave their classrooms and protest global warming in the streets, Thunberg is most often portrayed as a solitary figure pleading with adults to do something about her rapidly evaporating future—one girl against the world. This reduction of her message makes her a convenient symbol for both her allies and her enemies. For the latter, she’s merely a teenage girl, a frivolous person with no political heft, easy to dismiss. For the former, she’s something of a teen idol, a brave young face who marks the entryway to a new way of being, a new world that ensures continued human survival. Either she’s nothing or she’s everything; in neither case does she get to be a person among many who desire above all else to live.

Thunberg slides easily into the archetype of the young girl as a beacon of what’s to come. “The child is potential future ... so



If in the first chapters of her career Grimes occupied a position comparable to Thunberg's, as a young woman uniquely capable of righting wrongs and a vessel for the hopes of her fans, Miss Anthropocene is a steadfast refusal to assume a savior's role. The world is too much for one girl to carry. She drops it, lets it shatter, watches where the pieces land. Proximity to wealth and power make such an aesthetic stance an easy one to take: Climate change has already killed people—lots—and none of them billionaires. But even in the darkest sources of Grimes's imagery, the most brutal apocalypse stories, there is some room for hope. Teenagers survey the wreckage of the Earth, and quietly wonder what they should do next. **CP**

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>> *By Rob Brezsny*

♉ TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You are most likely to be in sweet alignment with cosmic rhythms if you regard the next three weeks as time of graduation. I encourage you to take inventory of the lessons you've been studying since your birthday in 2019. How have you done in your efforts to foster interesting, synergistic intimacy? Are you more passionately devoted to what you love? Have you responded brightly as life has pushed you to upgrade the vigor and rigor of your commitments? Just for fun, give yourself a grade for those "classes," as well as any others that have been important. Then—again, just for fun—draw up a homemade diploma for yourself to commemorate and honor your work.


96 CANCER (June 21-July 2): Cancerian author Lionel Trilling (1905-1975) was an influential intellectual and literary critic. One of his heroes was another influential intellectual and literary critic, Edmund Wilson. On one occasion, Trilling was using a urinal in a men's room at the New School for Social Research in New York. Imagine how excited he was when Wilson, whom he had never met, arrived to use the urinal right next to his. Now imagine his further buoyancy when Wilson not only spoke to Trilling but also expressed familiarity with his work. I foresee similar luck or serendipity coming your way soon: seemingly unlikely encounters with interesting resources and happy accidents that inspire your self-confidence.

LEO (July 23–Aug. 22): Poet Connee Berdera delivered a poignant message to her most valuable possession: the flesh and blood vehicle that serves as sanctuary for all her yearnings, powers, and actions. “My beloved body,” she writes, “I am so sorry I did not love you enough.” Near the poem’s end she vows “to love and cherish” her body. I wish she would have been even more forceful, saying something like, “From now on, dear body, I promise to always know exactly what you need and give it to you with all my ingenuity and panache.” Would you consider making such a vow to your own most valuable possession, Leo? It’s a favorable time to do so.

♊ VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Luckily, the turning point you have arrived at doesn't present you with 20 different possible futures. You don't have to choose from among a welter of paths headed in disparate directions. There are only a few viable options to study and think about. Still, I'd like to see you further narrow down the alternatives. I hope you'll use the process of elimination as you get even clearer about what you don't want. Let your fine mind gather a wealth of detailed information and objective evidence, then hand over the final decision to your intuition.

 **LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Certain artists are beyond my full comprehension. Maybe I'm not smart enough to understand their creations or I'm not deep enough to fathom why their work is considered important. For example, I don't enjoy or admire the operas of Wagner or the art of Mark Rothko. Same with the music of Drake or the novels of Raymond Carter or the art of Andy Warhol. The problem is with me, not them. I don't try to claim they're overrated or mediocre. Now I urge you to do what I just did. Libra, join on a broader scale. Acknowledge that some of the people and ideas and art and situations you can't appreciate are not necessarily faulty or wrong or inadequate. Their value may simply be impossible for you to recognize. It's a perfect time for you to undertake this humble work. I suspect it will be liberating.

♈ SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Scorpio-born Ralph Bakshi has made animated films and TV shows for over 60 years. His work has been influential. "I'm the biggest ripped-off cartoonist in the history of the world," he says. "Milder versions of his experience are not uncommon for many Scorpios. People are prone to copying you and borrowing from you and even stealing from you. They don't always consciously know they're doing it, and they may not offer you proper appreciation. I'm guessing that something like this phenomenon may be happening for you right now. My advice? First, be pleased about how much clout you're wielding. Second, if anyone is borrowing from you without making the proper acknowledgment, speak up about it.

 **SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): "Vainly I sought nourishment in shadows and errors," wrote author Jorge Luis Borges. We have all been guilty of miscalculations like those. Each of us has sometimes put our faith in people and ideas that weren't worthy of us. None of us is so wise that we always choose influences that provide the healthiest fuel. That's the bad news, Sagittarius. The good news is that you now have excellent instincts about where to find the best long-term nourishment.

♈ CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "When a woman tells the truth she is creating the possibility for more truth around her." I believe this same assertion is true about people of all genders. I also suspect that right now you are in a particularly pivotal position to be a candid revealer: to enhance and refine everyone's truth-telling by being a paragon of honesty yourself. To achieve the best results, I encourage you to think creatively about what exactly it means for you to tell the deep and entire truth.

WAGNIERS AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Through some odd Aquarian-like quirk, astrologers have come to harbor the apparently paradoxical view that your sign is ruled by both Saturn and Uranus. At first glance, that's crazy! Saturn is the planet of discipline, responsibility, conservatism, diligence, and order. Uranus is the planet of awakening, surprise, rebellion, barrier-breaking, and liberation. How can you Aquarians incorporate the energies of both? Well, that would require a lengthy explanation beyond the scope of this horoscope. But I will tell you this: During the rest of the year 2020, you will have more potential to successfully coordinate your inner Saturn and your inner Uranus than you have had in years. Homework: Meditate on how you will do just that.

X **PISCES** (Feb. 19–March 20). In 1637, renowned English poet John Milton wrote “Lycides,” a poetic elegy in honor of a friend. Reading it today, almost four centuries later, we are struck by how archaic and obscure the language is, with phrases like “O ye laurels” and “Ah! who hath reft my dearest pledge?” A famous 20th-century Milton poet named Robert Lowell was well-educated enough to understand Milton’s meaning, but also decided to “translate” all of “Lycides” into plainspoken modern English. I’d love to see you engage in comparable activities during the coming weeks, Pisce: updating the past; reshaping and reinterpretng your old stories; revising the ways you talk about and think about key memories.

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[illegible]

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY

1 Trainwreck's admission
8 Feathery neckpiece
11 Kind of reporter
14 Mosquito-borne illness
15 Tell talent
17 Rating highly
18 "All The ____ Portmans"
(2020 play)
19 Easily summoned
21 Eastern life force
22 Feel sick
23 Bad chemical
in some plastics
26 Zap with a gun
28 Experience something

1 "Brace for ____"
2 "Who's Afraid of Virginia
3 Woolf?" lead role
4 Courtroom stories
5 Entertainment
6 for the totally lost
7 Church of country
8 Disposal's location
9 Long winded story
10 Thief
11 Warner of the gods
12 Legal proceedings
13 Part of a neuron
14 with a nucleus
15 Swiss forest canton
16 Leaving line
17 Yankees chairman
18 Steinbrenner

ears or brains
33 2016 NBA Coach
of the Year
35 Place for blades
36 Place
37 “Fuller House”
guest star
38 Moo goo ____ pan
39 Key next to F1
41 “C’mon man!”
43 Shaded spots
44 It’s for the birds
46 Abstainer’s comment
47 Available for reference
48 Roof beam
53 Positions #7, on
MLB scorecards
54 Heads of Parliament
55 Unleashes (upon)
56 Going crazy
57 Quebec leader Levesque
58 Assuage
59 Mountain ____
60 “Hey, hombre!”

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SATURDAY MARCH 7 • 9PM
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Will rough oral worsen my sleep apnea?



Dan Savage

I'm a middle-aged gay man and I was recently diagnosed with sleep apnea. This is a disorder caused by the soft tissue in the throat collapsing during sleep. On top of making me feeling tired and awful all the time, sleep apnea is associated with a long list of health complications. I'm writing you because I'm into very rough oral. Gagging and retching turn me on. Since I don't want to risk making my condition worse, I stopped giving blowjobs after my diagnosis. But will giving blowjobs the way I like to give them actually make things worse? The internet was not helpful, and I didn't feel comfortable asking the sleep specialist.

REALLY EXCITED TO CHOKE HARMLESSLY

"The vast majority of people with sleep apnea have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)," said Dr. Anna Grosz, a certified otolaryngologist in practice in Portland, Oregon. "It results from muscle relaxation and collapse in the airway (throat), which narrows the passage for air to flow and then makes it harder to breathe and get oxygen."

When you fall asleep, RETCH, the muscles in your throat relax and collapse, restricting your ability to breathe. Your brain responds to this oxygen deprivation by waking you up, which tenses your muscles back up, un-collapsing them, and allowing you to breathe again.

Good news: Dr. Grosz doesn't think choking on dick is going to make your OSA any worse, and it might even make it better. "Theoretically," said Dr. Grosz, "increased tone of the muscles of the airway might be a good thing in terms of strengthening those muscles." There's no evidence that getting face-fucked will strengthen your ol' throat muscles, but there's no evidence that it will weaken them, either. "Ultimately, I don't think your reader is at risk of making his sleep apnea worse by continuing his oral sex practices," said Dr. Grosz.

I'm a straight man who enjoys the erotic "mummification" experience. My wife finds the process of wrapping me in cling film and duct tape extremely tedious. So we decided to invest in a sleep sack, which will shorten the process consider-

ably. I found a leather artisan on Etsy who makes them to order. During a video chat about sizing, the artisan made a reference to the "lucky man" who would be putting me in my sleep sack. I informed him I am straight. He apologized, saying that in his experience, it is mostly gay men who invest in this type of gear. I was nevertheless offended by his assumption. Your thoughts?

GOT EXTREMELY AFFRONTED RECENTLY

First thought: If gay men collapsed into puddles every time someone assumed we were straight, GEAR, we'd have to be reclassified as a liquid. Second thought: As a gay man, I'm sometimes annoyed when people assume I'm straight. But it's not an unreasonable assumption, since most people are straight. It's also rarely a malicious assumption. Similarly, GEAR, since all the men who've commissioned this Etsy artisan to make them sleep sacks in the past have been gay, the assumption he made about you wasn't unreasonable. And it's hard to see malice in it.

The offense you've taken, on the other hand, strikes me as both unreasonable and malicious; your reaction is so obviously rooted in homophobia (so what if some dude thought you might be gay?) and yet you came crying to a gay man about it. Final thought: Whereas a straight person who's assumed to be gay can correct the record without fear, a gay person who's assumed to be straight has to do a risk assessment first: Is this person going to freak out or get violent? Having to do those sorts of risk assessments all your life—starting in childhood with your own family—can take an emotional toll. So instead of being angry or offended by this experience, GEAR, you should be grateful that you can say, "Actually, I'm straight," without having to worry about being punched in your stupid face or kicked out of your parents' house.

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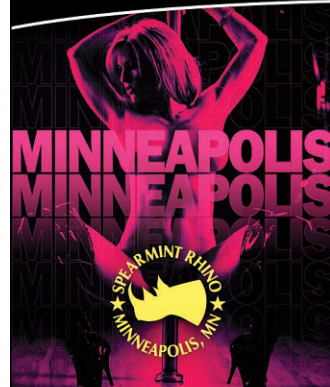


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527
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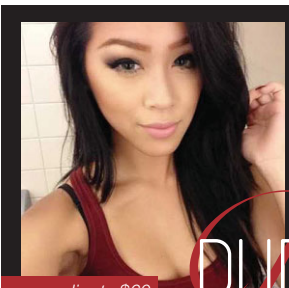
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